

**REMARKS**

Subsequent to entry of the foregoing amendments, claims 1-3 and 6-9 are presently pending in this application. Claims 4 and 5 are hereby incorporated into claim 1 and consequently have been cancelled. Additional editorial amendments are made to the claims to improve their clarity.

The present invention is directed to a pneumatic radial tire that can improve handling performance without sacrificing hydroplaning performance.

Amended claim 1 further clarifies the invention by combining original claim 1 with original claims 4 and 5. As set forth therein, the pneumatic radial tire has an important feature that a block section along the sipe is formed so that a cut area of an end of a center side region can be smaller as compared with that of an end of a shoulder side region, wherein, on the block section along the sipe, a ratio between a sipe sectional area S2 of the shoulder side region and a sipe sectional area S1 of the center side region is as follows:

$$1.4 \leq S2/S1 \leq 2.0$$

so that block rigidity can be higher in the end of the center side region as compared with that in the end of the shoulder side region. When the sipe sectional area ratio S2/S1 drops below 1.4, a reaction force in accordance with a steering angle is weakened as the steering angle starts to change because of a small difference in block rigidity between the shoulder side and the center side. On the other hand, when the sipe sectional area ratio S2/S1 exceeds 2.0, the sipe sectional area of the center side is reduced too much to obtain original sipe effects. Thus, maximum

effects can be obtained when the sipe section is formed so as to set its area ratio  $S2/S1$  to be between 1.4 and 2.0.

The Examiner mentions that the claimed ratio of  $S2/S1$  being 1.4 to 2.0 would have been obvious in view of (1) Caretta's teaching to provide the shoulder sipes 11 with thick part 11c and (2) Caretta's teaching that the sipes enhance elastic deformability of the blocks to restrict their sliding and thereby limit overall noisiness.

However, Caretta fails to show or suggest a concrete sipe sectional area ratio  $S2/S1$  and thus cannot achieve the effect of the claimed invention. Further, the thick part 11c in Caretta is different from the sipe sectional area of the claimed invention. The thick part 11c has a thickness in a direction perpendicular to the cutting direction of the sipe (width direction of the tread). In sharp contradistinction, the sipe sectional area of the claimed invention clearly refers to the sectional area of the sipe as shown in Figs. 3-6. Consequently, it is impossible for Caretta to show or even fairly suggest a sipe sectional area ratio as claimed.

Accordingly, the claimed invention would not have been obvious from Caretta (taken alone or in combination with the other cited art, which is equally deficient), and thus the invention as recited in the instant claims is believed to be patentable.

In view of the preceding amendments and remarks, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue that the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephonic

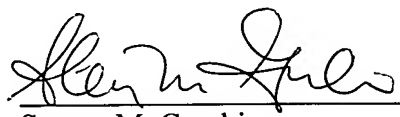
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interview, he is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the local telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees (except the Issue/Publication Fees) to our Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any over-payments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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